

## Cultures of Shame in England and Japan (1500–1800): Comparisons and Case Studies<sup>(1)</sup>

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Whatever one may think of Ruth Benedict's much-criticized distinction between "shame" and "guilt" cultures, no-one doubts that ideas and practices centring on shame were a very important element in pre-modern Japanese culture.<sup>(2)</sup> The premise of the work that I began under the auspices of the Institute for the Comparative Studies of Culture at Tokyo Woman's Christian University was that shame was also – albeit not necessarily in exactly the same ways – of great importance in English culture in the period 1500–1800, to an extent hitherto unrecognized. I proposed to demonstrate this through the study of English literature. My preliminary findings were presented and discussed at a seminar at TWCU during my residency in October 2016 and have since been developed as an article.<sup>(3)</sup>

One of my primary tasks was to address what is meant by "shame" and "guilt" and how they may be distinguished. To summarize briefly, guilt refers to culpability in relation to some specific act or omission and has strong legal connotations. Modern psychological studies indicate that a sense of guilt may be outward-looking and positive, in that it inclines the individual towards accepting responsibility and towards reparation. Shame is a much more basic emotion, arising from a dislocation between how one is and how one would like oneself to be. It is markedly gendered, reflecting differences in behaviour expected of men and women. But unlike guilt, shame may result from circumstances that are not the fault of the individual. One may also feel shame for other people, especially friends or family, irrespective of whether one has any control over their actions. A sense of shame depends on the apprehension or actual existence of a group of onlookers – judging, criticizing, mocking. But the interior dimensions of shame are important. Characteristically it manifests itself in the body, especially in red cheeks, downcast eyes, slumped posture. Shame may be viewed positively as a bridle to restrain behaviour and a spur to do better. But it is potentially more destructive than guilt in that it attacks the sense of self. Alternatively, it may lead to violent action to destroy the person or persons perceived to have brought shame on the individual.<sup>(4)</sup>

The article based on the TWCU presentation goes on to discuss a variety of manifestations of shame, including the theme in English literature from Shakespeare to Jane Austen. This paper approaches the subject from a different angle, paying attention to Japanese as well as English culture. One of my first and most memorable experiences in Japan was to visit the graves of the forty-six samurai – of the forty-seven originally involved – together with their master, at Sengakuji Temple. Shortly before I returned to England, I attended a performance of kabuki, which, following a long tradition begun shortly after the events themselves, dramatized in compelling form an episode in the so-called Akō vendetta. This was actually a complex and contested sequence of events that began in the spring of 1701, when Lord Asano attacked Lord Kira in the palace of the shogun and was sentenced to seppuku that very day. They culminated in 1703, when Lord Asano's outraged followers, now reduced to the status of *rōnin* or masterless samurai, exacted their revenge by slicing off his enemy's head and were, as a result, themselves sentenced to commit ritual suicide.<sup>(5)</sup>

It is hard to imagine a similar incident occurring in England at the same time. Yet the ideas and emotions that underlay these events were by no means wholly alien. Group vendetta had not been a feature of English society in recent centuries, though it had been in Scotland and Ireland, as in some other western European states.<sup>(6)</sup> But the practice of fighting duels on “points of honour” was very much alive. New modes of duelling, based on Italian models using lethally long “rapiers”, had peaked around 1600. Thereafter the authorities' hostility to the practice led to a gradual decline, but duels between gentlemen continued to be fought throughout the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth.<sup>(7)</sup> In English law, assault in the presence of the king's justices was treated as a lesser form of treason, the penalty being the cutting off of the culprit's hand. A statute of 1541 (repealed 1553) extended this offence to include bloodshed in any place where the king was personally residing. It was specified that the amputation should be carried out by the king's servants in a highly ritualized manner. The serjeant of the wood yard was to provide a block, the master cook to bring a knife, the household surgeon was to sear the severed arm, and so on.<sup>(8)</sup>

Cutting off the heads of enemies and counting them as trophies is said to have been a tradition of Gaelic Irish warfare.<sup>(9)</sup> But in England the severing of heads was essentially a royal prerogative, enacted within the judicial system. Beheading was a relatively honourable and certainly more merciful penalty accorded to aristocratic traitors, whereas

their lower-class counterparts suffered the far more painful and humiliating sentence of being drawn on a hurdle to the place of execution, hanged till they were half dead, castrated, disembowelled, beheaded, and finally chopped into quarters, so that their body parts could be publicly displayed as a warning to others.<sup>(10)</sup> But suicide was never demanded because in the Christian tradition it was considered a grave sin. Shame had to be first endured, then resolved by confession to God and submission to the legal authorities. A person who committed suicide compounded his or her shame. Self-killing was not a way to purge shame, as in Japan.

More far-reaching comparisons between England and Japan in early modern times likewise reveal points of similarity but also many differences.<sup>(11)</sup> By the twelfth century the Japanese polity had emerged as a symbiosis between the sacred authority of the emperors and the shoguns who wielded effective power. Divisions within the Ashikaga shogunate led to the disastrous Ōnin war (1467–77), which destroyed much of Kyoto and ushered in the Warring States period when the central authority was eclipsed by a multitude of daimyō (feudal lords) engaged in constant conflict. In the late sixteenth century a sequence of “unifiers” – Oda Nobunaga (1534–82), Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536–98) and Tokugawa Ieyasu (1542–1616) – gradually reimposed order. The process was accompanied by great ferocity and complicated by the ill-fated invasion of Korea (1592–8). Thereafter the Tokugawa shogunate, its power based on both military might and vast landholdings, provided two hundred years of strong and effective rule, faltering only in the nineteenth century.

In 1500 England was a kingdom separate from the neighbouring realm of Scotland, with claims to lordship over Ireland (a dependent kingdom from 1541).<sup>(12)</sup> Though the late fifteenth-century had witnessed repeated bouts of bitter warfare between rival claimants to the throne, central authority had never dissolved to the extent it did in Japan. Indeed the monarchy of Henry VIII (1509–47) was remarkably assertive, declaring the independence of the church of England, firmly suppressing internal rebellion, and mounting major military campaigns in France. The reign of Henry’s daughter Elizabeth I (1558 – 1603) was more cautious, but after the Northern Rising of 1569 peace was maintained in England and the state proved capable both of resisting major rebellion in Ireland and of beating off attacks from Spain – the foremost European power of the day. When Elizabeth died childless, the Stuart king of Scotland succeeded to her throne as James I of England (1603–25). This dynastic link foreshadowed the Union of 1707 which

created the kingdom of Great Britain.

The political history of England in the seventeenth century was more turbulent than that of Japan for several reasons. Japanese religious culture incorporated shinto, a wide variety of Buddhist sects and, of increasing importance, neo-Confucian philosophy. Armed religious groups had been a serious menace in the sixteenth century, and Christianity was a factor in the Shimabara Rebellion (1637–8); but otherwise Tokugawa state power was not threatened by religious diversity. In England Christianity had no rivals, but the Europe-wide split between Catholics and Protestants injected serious tensions. A minority of Catholic “recusants” proved impossible to eradicate and it was feared that they would make common cause with foreign enemies. Differences among Protestants exacerbated the problems. Religious divisions combined in malign ways with conflicting visions of kingship. Essentially the choice was whether the crown should tend towards absolutism, with ultimate power resting firmly with the monarch, or pursue a more constitutional path, with emphasis on legal constraints on royal power and the role of Parliament – the national representative assembly which by 1600 still met only intermittently at the behest of the crown.

Political tensions were exacerbated by the ill-advised policies of individual monarchs, plus the difficulties of managing three kingdoms with differing political and cultural traditions. The dramatic outcome was bloody civil war between king and Parliament in 1642–6 and 1648, followed by the public trial and execution of Charles I and the establishment of an ad hoc series of short-lived republican regimes (1649–60). Almost as remarkable was the deposition of the Catholic James II, after a brief reign (1685–8), in favour of the Protestant Dutch leader William of Orange and his wife Mary (the daughter of James II), who before her death in 1694 ruled jointly with her husband. This turn of events had further consequences. William’s continuing involvement in large-scale continental wars against Louis XIV of France, renewed in the reign of Queen Anne (1702–14), led to a transformation of Britain’s military and naval establishment, a massive overhaul of its system of taxation, a financial revolution that provided for the effective underpinning of the state, and the annual summoning of Parliament which henceforth became an essential element of politics and government.

Another consequence of the deposition of James II was a recurrent threat from Jacobite pretenders – major rebellions, drawing most support from Scotland, occurred in 1715 and 1745. Meanwhile the Act of Settlement (1701), which limited the succession to

Protestants, resulted in the accession of the elector of the German principality of Hanover as king of Great Britain in 1714. The whole bundle of events contributed to a process whereby, slowly and gradually, the personal power of successive kings diminished in favour of ministers answerable to Parliament. By 1800 Great Britain was self-consciously a constitutional monarchy.

It was also a state with immense territorial ambitions. Great Britain played a major role in the recurrent continental conflicts of the eighteenth century, while her military, naval and financial contributions to the coalitions that had, by 1815, utterly defeated Napoleon were enormous. Meanwhile Britain had in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries nourished, before partially losing, a colonial empire in North America; acquired some islands in the Caribbean region, plus a variety of small but strategically placed territories such as Gibraltar; and was in the process of building an imperial presence in India. By the early nineteenth century the merchant ships of Great Britain were conducting an extremely valuable global trade, protected by a powerful royal navy. Here was a major contrast with Tokugawa Japan. The latter allowed only a limited amount of overseas commerce, mainly with China and Korea. Famously – not least to prevent the infiltration of Christian missionaries – it severely restricted its contacts with the West. The only permitted point of contact was a small Dutch presence in an island off Nagasaki.

Demographically the comparison between early modern Britain and Japan is less unequal. In 1800 the United Kingdom had a population of about 16 million, with over 5 million people living in Ireland and over 1.5 million in Scotland. Three centuries earlier, England had had fewer than 2.5 million inhabitants and was not highly urbanized; even less so were Ireland or even Scotland. The period 1500–1800 witnessed not merely a marked rise in the total population but, more strikingly, the phenomenal growth of London. This city was simultaneously an international entrepôt of growing importance; the focus of inland and coastal trade; a nexus of manufacturing; the centre of government and the legal system; and an increasingly important social and cultural centre for the aristocracy and gentry. Feeding on all these advantages, the metropolis expanded from about 88,000 in 1560 to over 500,000 by 1700. In 1800 its population stood at around 1,000,000.

By that time other urban centres were growing apace. Already by 1700 the capitals of Scotland (Edinburgh) and Ireland (Dublin) were important, as were a constellation of regional towns and cities plus burgeoning centres of incipient industrialization.<sup>(13)</sup> But it was hard to outdo Tokugawa Japan. The unification period stimulated the proliferation of

castle towns. In the more peaceful conditions of the seventeenth century, many of them became important centres of administration, production and consumption. The major rice market and manufacturing centre of Osaka grew steadily from about 200,000 in 1610 to something approaching half a million in the 1780s. The decision to make Edo the headquarters of the Tokugawa shogunate led to phenomenal growth. In 1590 it was a mere village, but by the early eighteenth century its residents numbered over a million.<sup>(14)</sup> Meanwhile the population of Japan as a whole – throughout the period much greater than England, Scotland and Ireland – rose from between 12 and 18 million in 1600 to 28–30 million in the early nineteenth century.

About half the inhabitants of Edo were samurai. Under the Tokugawa their military activities dwindled and they became administrators, scholars, and patrons of the arts and of philosophy. Members of the nobility and gentry were also an important presence in London and many provincial English towns and cities, but in nothing like this concentration. This raises broader comparative questions about social structures in early modern Britain and Japan. Around 1500 England was dominated by a small landed elite that still retained some of the ethos of a warrior aristocracy. From the reign of Elizabeth onwards, military and naval activity gradually became the preserve of a professional minority. Increasingly, the nobility and gentry served the monarch through involvement in local and central government, at the same time abandoning their fortified residences. All these changes were underpinned by an increased emphasis on education and learning. The parallel with the samurai is not exact but there are obvious points of comparison.

Meanwhile in Britain other social groups grew in numbers and importance. Those who made their living from commerce and industry – from wealthy merchants to humble shopkeepers and artisans – were of growing significance in the seventeenth century and even more so in the eighteenth. Yet the landed interest remained strong. Its upper levels were dominated by still relatively small numbers of wealthy gentry and a very restricted circle of great magnates. The peerage remained influential in government and in a very real sense aristocratic values still dominated. However, while entry to the peerage was severely restricted, the boundary between the broader group of gentry and the wider society was relatively fluid, depending more on wealth, manners and lifestyle than on birth or legal status. Increasingly professional groups and successful merchants and manufacturers were seen as having “gentle” status.

Tokugawa society was more rigidly organized. Hideyoshi’s famous “sword hunt” of

1588 required those who had hitherto borne arms either to give up their weapons and cultivate the land as peasants, or to live as samurai in castle towns, subsisting on stipends provided by daimyō. In 1591 Hideyoshi took steps to restrict geographical and social mobility, instructing magistrates in a census of 1592 to register “military men as military men, farmers as farmers, and the townspeople as townspeople”. This rigid social system became one of the foundation stones of the Tokugawa order. Despite being increasingly demilitarized, the samurai continued to dominate socially and politically. They comprised between five and ten per cent of the total population, a much higher proportion than the gentry in England. At the higher levels of the social structure, daimyō still exercised considerable autonomy in their vast estates, which together covered two-thirds of Japan. Yet these landholdings were often fragmented and the activities of daimyō were monitored. From 1635 they were compelled to spend every other year in the city, rather than on their rural estates. Moreover, they were liable to be transferred from region to region. This was especially true of those closest to the headquarters of Tokugawa power. The so-called “tozama” (exterior) daimyō, based in more peripheral areas, were less subject to challenge.

All these circumstances help to explain why the Akō vendetta stirred such deep passions. Revenge killings were by no means an everyday feature of Japanese society around 1700, so such an event was bound to provoke the shogunate into firm action. On the other hand, the actions of the forty-seven, presenting themselves as “loyal retainers and righteous samurai”, appealed to values that appeared to be slipping away. There is also evidence that Lord Kira’s greed and arrogance made him personally unpopular among ordinary people as well as his social equals. Whatever their stance on the rectitude or otherwise of the forty-seven, commentators recognized that issues of honour and shame were central to the whole sequence of events. Asami Keisai (1652–1711) observed that Lord Kira allowed Lord Asano to be “disgraced and humiliated before the illustrious representatives of the imperial court”, and hence provoked the latter to slash at him. On the other hand, Satō Naokata (1650–1719) dismissed Lord Asano’s botched attack as “laughable in the extreme”, yet observed that Lord Kira was nonetheless the loser. On being assaulted, he “never even drew his short sword. He collapsed in surprise, and his face turned pale, making him the laughingstock of samurai throughout the realm. He behaved so shamefully that even death would have been a better fate.” Deflecting suggestions that Lord Kira as well as Lord Asano should have been penalized, he asked

“What could the shogunate have done to punish him any further?” The memorandum of Okado Denpachirō, a palace official and eyewitness to the attack, articulated Lord Asano’s case. The verdict on him was “much too one-sided. Any *tozama daimyō* would be shamed by it”. The underlying premise of all these opinions was that to “hang onto life by enduring shame and humiliation is not the way of the samurai”.<sup>(15)</sup>

So why had Lord Asano’s followers waited so long before acting, and why had they chosen the conspiratorial method of organizing an armed band to seek Lord Kira out and invade his house by night in order to kill him? Actually there were many reasons, not least the fact that the retainers did not agree on what they wanted to achieve and why.<sup>(16)</sup> In the view of Dazai Shundai (1680–1747), they should have assumed a more heroic stance. They owed it to their lord to defend Akō Castle as long as possible, then set in on fire and commit suicide one by one. If this was not feasible, they should have gone immediately to Edo to kill Lord Kira, either dying in the attempt or committing suicide afterwards.<sup>(17)</sup> But it is easy to be wise after the event. The balance of opinion was that, although the forty-seven did not necessarily react in the best possible way, what they did was understandable and on the whole commendable. The shogunate, for its part, was right to punish them for violating the law, but showed wisdom and clemency in allowing them to die honourably by seppuku.

It is vain to seek a strictly parallel episode in England. But there were dramatic incidents of a different kind that can usefully be studied for the light they shed on issues of shame in the English context. Of particular interest is the liaison between Ford, Lord Grey (1655–1701) and Lady Henrietta Berkeley (c.1664–1706), because the real-life events of the 1680s formed the basis for a three-volume novel (published 1684–7) by the poet, playwright and prose-writer, Aphra Behn (c.1640–89).<sup>(18)</sup> But to understand this episode properly, it is first necessary to consider a further set of issues relating to early modern Britain and Japan – gender relations and sexual mores.

Whatever the status of women in Japan in the remote past, it is clear that well before the beginning of Tokugawa rule, Japanese society was strongly patriarchal. The “Seven Reasons for Divorce” arising from the wife’s misbehaviour – not necessarily a true reflection of the causes of divorce in practice – included disobedience, failure to bear children, lewdness, jealousy, foul disease, and stealing. Furthermore, “a woman shall be divorced who, by talking too much and prattling disrespectfully, disturbs the harmony of kinsmen and brings trouble to her household”. Such a household might well be a complex



entity. Many samurai had not only a wife but also concubines. If a wife “should forsake the way of womanhood and be divorced, shame shall cover her until her last hour”.<sup>(19)</sup>

The *Hyakkajō* (One Hundred Articles), a criminal code compiled under the shogun Yoshimune (1684–1751), laid down that adulterous wives or concubines, along with their male lovers, were subject to the death penalty. In practice, the wives of samurai were more likely to be so punished, while convicted adulteresses of the lower classes often got off with having their heads shaved. A husband at any social level who discovered his wife in flagrante delicto could kill her and her male lover on the spot. Again, the wives of samurai were disproportionately likely to suffer this fate. In contrast, male infidelity was not even listed as a crime. Many samurai, it was said, not only indulged in liaisons with women of pleasure but also had sexual relations with boys. Licensed brothels catering for all tastes were a prominent feature of many Japanese towns and cities.<sup>(20)</sup>

The “Greater Learning for Women” (1733) identified desirable female qualities as “gentle obedience, chastity, tenderness, and placidity”.<sup>(21)</sup> These would have resonated with Englishmen of the early modern period, for whom the corresponding virtues were conventionally summed up as “chastity, obedience and silence”. However, historians have shown that, in practice, English women could be remarkably assertive and to an extent the law supported them. The church did not allow divorce for adultery or any other kind of marital misbehaviour. The only recourse for the injured party – which could be either the husband or the wife – was a judicial separation without the right to remarry. From the late seventeenth century, it became possible to obtain divorces by Act of Parliament, but this was a remedy available only to a few wealthy people.<sup>(22)</sup>

In Scotland the death penalty for adultery was introduced in 1563, and there was pressure for a similar measure to be enacted in England. In 1650 the Puritan Commonwealth did indeed make adultery committed by a wife a capital felony; but prosecutions under this branch of the act were few and the measure lapsed in 1660. Yet throughout the period any form of premarital or extramarital sex was illegal. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, numerous prosecutions were mounted for such offences, mostly in church courts but also in some urban tribunals. In London, Bridewell Hospital dealt with sexual offenders, alongside those deemed to be the “idle” poor. In these courts, whipping and various forms of shame punishment were the main penalties. Women suffered more than men, but the latter were by no means immune from prosecution – with the caveat that nobles and gentlemen were the least liable to be

molested. This system of sexual regulation was at its height in the sixteenth and early-to-mid seventeenth centuries. Thereafter its intensity slackened, but only very slowly. Indeed, one result of the Revolution of 1688 was a campaign of moral rearmament, sponsored by the new monarchs William III and Mary II and spearheaded by newly formed "Societies for Reformation of Manners". Active in promoting thousands of prosecutions well into the eighteenth century, the Societies targeted many kinds of vice, including prostitution and other sexual transgressions. Meanwhile, the sexual misdemeanours of the rich and famous were often censured indirectly – they were the subject of lampoons and a variety of printed publications that exposed their vices to a gleeful populace.<sup>(23)</sup>

It is against this background that the case of Lord Grey and Lady Henrietta Berkeley must be understood. Two elements bearing on different facets of honour and shame were involved. The first was political. Grey was an active member of the "Whigs", who opposed the succession of James II on the grounds that he was a Catholic. When more or less legitimate parliamentary opposition proved ineffective in securing James's "exclusion", the Whigs turned to plotting armed rebellion. Involved in the Rye House conspiracy in 1683, Grey was indicted for treason in July that year, but had already fled abroad. In 1685, on the accession of James II, he took part in the ill-fated rebellion of the duke of Monmouth. Captured after the decisive battle of Sedgemoor, he secured a pardon by agreeing to testify against his fellow conspirators. Monmouth's head was hacked off in a shamefully botched execution.

Meanwhile Grey had been also involved in troubles of a different kind. Married to Mary, daughter of the earl of Berkeley, Grey suspected her of having an affair with Monmouth. In 1681 Grey himself began an adulterous relationship – deemed to be incestuous in church law – with his wife's younger sister, Henrietta. When this became known the following year, Henrietta precipitately fled her father's house and went into hiding in London. Her outraged family was reduced to advertising in the periodical press and offering a reward for information on her whereabouts, provoking a plethora of popular lampoons. Scandal was piled on scandal when the earl of Berkeley prosecuted Grey for unlawful seduction. Grey was found guilty but escaped punishment, while Lady Henrietta was shamed in open court. "You have injured your own reputation, and prostituted both your body and your honour," pronounced the judge, while there was a sensation at the end of the trial when it was revealed that, to escape the authority of her father, Lady

Henrietta had married one of Grey's gentleman servants. She eventually accompanied Grey abroad when he went into exile and gave birth to his child.<sup>(24)</sup>

Behn's novel was a fanciful embellishment on these events, locating the protagonists, called "Silvia" and "Philander", in sixteenth-century France. Behn herself was a staunch loyalist, or "Tory". The political purpose of her novel was to denigrate Grey and his fellow-conspirators as immoral or amoral villains who were as ready to destabilize a kingdom as they were to destroy the honour and peace of households. The duplicity, hypocrisy, self-deception, unbridled emotions, and insatiable sexual appetites of the protagonists are gradually revealed in the second and third volumes, which combine what purport to be real-life letters with authorial comment and criticism embedded in third-person narrative laced with vivid dialogue. The first volume, covering the period up to Silvia's flight, appears to be more sympathetic to the lovers and presents them in their own terms through the medium of their correspondence.

The work is rich in discourses of shame and indeed also of guilt. References to the physical and emotional manifestations of shame, such as blushing and confusion, are likewise abundant. Silvia warns Philander of the dangers of plotting treason: "a Traytor?", she inquires, reminding him that this is "the worst of Titles, the most inglorious and shameful", which will render him "infamous and accurs'd to all eternity". Vividly she evokes a treason trial and its outcome, imagining Philander "preparing Eloquence for a Council Table, and in thy busie and guilty imaginations, haranguing it to the grave Judges, defending thy innocence, or evading thy guilt [...] Sometimes in thy labouring fancy the horror of a dreadful Sentence for an ignominious death". In her mind's eye she saw him "publickly dye, [...] led [to execution] a sad Victim thro the joyful crowd – reproacht [...] ingloriously [...] a shameful Victim".<sup>(25)</sup>

More personal aspects of male shame are also evoked. The ignominious plight of being a cuckold – a man whose wife was unfaithful – was a major theme in late medieval and early modern English literature. Here it is given an unusual twist, since Philander rejoices that his wife's adultery emancipated him by breaking "the dull heavy chain [of matrimony], and I with joy submitted to my shameful freedome". Yet other references indicate how much he resents it.<sup>(26)</sup> Later he suffers a different form of shame when his first attempt to deflower Silvia is foiled by impotence – a theme explored further by Behn in a famous poem.<sup>(27)</sup> A recurring theme throughout the book is a species of male shame that spans the personal and the political. This is the ignominy of being "effeminate",

sharply depicted in many of the characters (though not all recognize it in themselves). In this context, “effeminate” does not mean woman-like in appearance or behaviour – with implications of homosexuality – but, on the contrary, being too much in sexual thrall to women, to the extent that a man may neglect his own business or the public affairs. This was one of the weaknesses of which the real-life duke of Monmouth stood accused.

Predictably, it is the shame and destruction of *female* honour entailed in loss of virginity, illicit sex and incestuous adultery that are explored at greatest length. Silvia’s sister, Mertilla, invokes the authority of parents and reminds her of “the infamy of being a Prostitute!” and loss of “eternal fame”. “Alas, consider after an action so shamefull, thou must obscure thy self in some remote corner of the world, where honesty and honour never are heard of: No thou canst not shew thy face, but ’twill be pointed at for something monstrous: for a hundred ages may not produce a story so lewdly infamous and loose as thine.” She warns Silvia that Philander, who “has broke his Vows with Heaven and me, will be again perjur’d to Heaven and thee, and all the world!”<sup>(28)</sup>

Silvia herself knows the risks she runs; and yet she rushes towards ruin. Honour and virtue seem dull in comparison with the love she feels. She and Philander feed each other’s fantasies, expressing their desires in a heightened language of amorous intrigue, expressed in the idiom of classical pastoral mythology (Venus, Cupid, nymphs, shepherds, crystal fountains, shaded groves), stiffened from time to time with naturalistic arguments for the free expression of sexual passion untrammelled by law, honour and filial duty. Silvia presents herself as “a poor lost Virgin languishing and undone; sighing her willing rape”, confessing that “I dy with shame, but I must be undone”; “some Magick Spell [...] in the midst of all my sense of Shame keeps me from true repentance.”<sup>(29)</sup> Behn’s innovation is to convey a vivid impression of the dangers of ignominious loss of female reputation combined with shame’s hidden pleasures. Silvia’s sense of self-abandonment, of complete exposure of every part of her body, mind and soul to her lover, adds a thrilling intensity to her awakening sexual passion. Philander wonders at Silvia’s “strange indearing mixtures ’twixt joy and shame, ’twixt love and new surprise”, while she herself is astonished to find that “I have Wishes, new unwonted Wishes; at every thought of thee, I find a strange disorder in my blood, that pants and burns in every Vein, and makes me blush, and sigh, and grows impatient, asham’d and angry”. “Oh, that I shou’d not dy with shame to own it,” she cries; “yet see (I say) how from one soft degree to another, I do not only confess the shamefull truth, but act it too.”<sup>(30)</sup>

“Oh, by what insensible degrees,” reflects Silvia, revelling in her shame, “a Maid in love may arrive to say any thing to her Lover without blushing?”. Where had she “learnt the harden’d and unblushing folly?”<sup>(31)</sup> Her subsequent experience of being betrayed by Philander and pursued by other men leads rapidly to loss of innocence. It transforms her into a woman whose desire to triumph over her admiring male “slaves”, coupled with a mercenary determination to maintain her luxurious lifestyle, leads her to betray repeatedly not only the men in her life but also her own better self. Yet she never becomes utterly shameless, and the narrative continues to be punctuated by her “blushes” and “confusion”. Towards the end of the novel, she is shocked to realize that even in the eyes of a sympathetic admirer, she is by now seen as a “Whore” - a term which, spoken disparagingly of any woman, especially to her face, was in this period the most mortifying of insults.<sup>(32)</sup>

These quotations are intended merely to give a taste of what Aphra Behn has to say about shame, in this as in her other works. Fuller exploration must be set aside for another occasion. Meanwhile I hope that I have demonstrated, in this brief essay, that cultures of shame may be profitably explored in both Japanese and British contexts, and that English literature of various kinds provides a powerful optic for viewing the phenomenon. I am grateful to the Institute for the Comparative Studies of Culture for giving me the opportunity to begin this journey of exploration on the beautiful campus of Tokyo Woman’s Christian University.

## Notes

- (1) I should like to thank Professor Noriyuki Harada (my sponsor at TWCU) and Professor Akiko Kusunoki for facilitating my visit to Japan in October 2016 and for their unfailing generosity and many kindnesses.
- (2) Ruth Benedict, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1946) 222–5; Millie R. Creighton, “Revisiting Shame and Guilt Cultures: A Forty-Year Pilgrimage,” *Ethos* 18 (1990): 279–307.
- (3) The original paper was read at TWCU on 16 October 2016 and will be published with revision in *Poetica* 86 (forthcoming) under the title “Shame in English Culture from Shakespeare to Jane Austen.”
- (4) Gerhart Piers and Milton B. Singer, *Shame and Guilt: A Psychoanalytic and a Cultural Study* (Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas, 1953); Helen Merrell Lynd, *On Shame and the Search for Identity* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958); Helen B. Lewis, *Shame and Guilt in Neurosis* (New York: International UP, 1971); Bernard Williams, *Shame and Necessity* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1993); June Price Tangney and Ronda L. Dearing, *Shame and Guilt* (London and New York: Guilford P, 2002).

- (5) Eiko Ikegami, *The Taming of the Samurai: Honorific Individualism and the Making of Modern Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1995) 223-40. One of the forty-seven was not involved in the actual killing and escaped seppuku.
- (6) Jenny Wormald, "Bloodfeud, Kindred and Government in Early Modern Scotland", *Past and Present* 87 (1980): 54-97.
- (7) V. G. Kiernan, *The Duel in European History: Honour and the Reign of Aristocracy* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1988).
- (8) Sir John Baker, *The Oxford History of the Laws of England. Volume VI: 1483-1558* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003) 289, 590.
- (9) S. J. Connolly, ed., *The Oxford Companion to Irish History*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002) 616.
- (10) J. S. Cockburn, ed., *Crime in England, 1550-1800* (London: Methuen, 1977) 42-3.
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